

Building an Inclusive Organization



Inclusion

Inclusion is the state of being seen, respected, and supported. It's when we are able to come into work feeling comfortable and confident to be ourselves. It's feeling we truly belong and are seen as a person whose thoughts, ideas, and goals are valued.

A report by [McKinsey & Company](#) found diverse and inclusive organizations outperform organizations that lack in their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts. Research shows billions of dollars are lost due to this lack of inclusion.

What might cause companies that prioritize creating an inclusive company culture to outperform those that do not? A study conducted by [Accenture](#), found companies where employees felt engaged were more likely to see high-profit growth.

This study also reported a perception gap between leaders who say their organizations are inclusive and employees who feel very differently. 98% of leaders felt they created an inclusive work environment for employees, 80% of employees reported feeling included at work.

The almost 20 percentage point gap mentioned in the study by Accenture illustrates how some approaches taken by leaders might actually impede their DEI efforts. Employees feel as if they don't truly belong in that organization. If employees do not feel safe, engaged, or valued, they lose the desire to be productive within their organization.

Ineffective DEI Approaches vs Effective DEI Approaches

Ineffective DEI approaches promote shame or create fear resulting in a lack of psychological safety in the workplace. These methods often call people 'out' for lacking understanding. They might use role-play or pre-scripted examples rather than authentic stories. Most ineffective approaches focus only on information transfer and passive learning.

Conversely, effective approaches create enthusiasm for improvement and a psychologically safe work environment. They also call people 'in' to participate in dialogue and use authentic, real-life stories and participant experiences. Most importantly, while an ineffective approach may only be focused on behavior-modification, an effective approach enables both mindset and behavior change.

3 Types of DEI Solutions

When most companies try to implement equity, diversity, and inclusivity practices, they struggle to find success. One common type of solution focuses on compliance. Efforts are only made to mitigate risks. As the studies show, these programs can do more harm than good.

Another solution some organizations introduce is putting in place policies and training to prescribe behavioral approaches to DEI-specific situations. People become more concerned about

signing the log that they attended the training rather than actually learning about what it means to create an inclusive work environment.

Is the focus to be DEI certified or is the focus to *see and understand* people? Policies are important, but if we fail to address the underlying mindset, traditional DEI approaches will often fail.

A third solution addresses shifting underlying mindsets—*how we see and regard others*. Our capacity to see and regard others differently is at the root of significant behavior and cultural changes we'd like to see in our organizations.

To create the inclusive workplace our teams deserve, we must be outward and regard others as we do ourselves. We must be willing to work on changing the underlying mindset and as we shift our mindset as individuals and as an organization, the behavior will come along with it.

The key to building an inclusive organization is to be authentic—people respond to what is real.

The Importance of Authenticity

Our capacity to listen and learn and build relationships is at the very heart of effectively creating inclusive environments and building inclusive organizations. The key to building an inclusive organization is to be authentic—people respond to what is real.

To get there we have to be honest about what is wrong and we have to be willing to approach people's stories with

vulnerability and empathy. Our authenticity doesn't impede our ability to be professional, what it does is it gives other people an opportunity and an invitation to be authentic as well.

When we start seeing people for who they are, they become alive to us. As they become alive to us, we invite them to do the same. That invitation can be so powerful that once we truly start seeing each other as people with needs, objectives, and challenges, we build meaningful relationships. Those meaningful relationships give us the desired results—authentically inclusive organizations.

As we shift our mindset and focus on being outward, we become equipped to create a work environment where people feel seen. Our inclusive culture invites people to bring their true and best selves.



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